

Safe by DBSean

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Summary:

“El?” Mike asked, now fully awake, his concern and confusion quickly overriding any remnants of sleep or exhaustion he may have been experiencing. “What’s wrong? Did something happen?”

Eleven nodded, and Mike saw for the first time that there were tears in her eyes.

"Not safe."

Safe

Author's Note:

First “Stranger Things” fanfiction...and first fanfiction in over a year. I adore Mike and Eleven and their relationship, and I felt like I was going to explode if I didn’t write something about them. Takes place post-Season 2, after the Snow Ball but before Eleven is (presumably) allowed to go out in public in Season 3, so beware of potential spoilers.

“Mike?”

Michael Wheeler frowned as he felt the last vestiges of sleep slowly fade away, the darkness parting as he opened his eyes and began to wake up. He’d not been dreaming, for which he was thankful, as his dreams had largely been stressful or frightening of late, and thus it was with great regret and a fair amount of struggle that he found himself being pulled back into the waking world. But what had woken him?

Groaning lightly and rubbing the last of the sleep from his eyes, Mike sat up in bed and lazily looked around his bedroom for the source of his waking. He didn’t have to look for long before he felt a hand upon his own, a gentle touch that finally shocked him fully into consciousness.

Eleven stood by his bedside, still in her pajamas, her hair a curly mess and her cheeks tinged pink with emotion. Dirt stained her bare feet, indicating she had walked all the way from Hopper’s cabin in the woods to the Wheeler residence, as though the thought of getting dressed or putting on shoes hadn’t even occurred to her until she was already too far gone.

It had been five months since the Snow Ball and, though he had visited her several times since then under the pretense of hanging with his friends or ‘helping Hopper out at the station,’ Mike still felt his heart skip a beat whenever he saw Eleven standing in front of him in the flesh. After a solid year without her, without knowing whether

she was alive or dead, or if she even remembered him, every meeting with her now, every minute, every single second they were together, was precious to him.

“El?” Mike asked, now fully awake, his concern and confusion quickly overriding any remnants of sleep or exhaustion he may have been experiencing. “What’s wrong? Did something happen?”

Eleven nodded, and Mike saw for the first time that there were tears in her eyes.

“Bad dreams,” she said simply. “I was in the lab.”

Mike couldn’t help but release the breath he hadn’t even been aware he had been holding, relieved to hear the issue at hand wasn’t something monumentally more terrifying. After a year of dealing with Demogorgons, shadow monsters, and the grief that came with losing Eleven on that fateful November evening in 1983, nightmares were definitely something Mike felt he could help her with.

“Did you...did you walk all the way here?” Mike asked, finally noticing the dirt on her feet and her unkempt appearance in general. Eleven nodded. “But Hopper...?”

“Not home,” Eleven interjected softly, frustration evident in her voice. “Not safe. I left a note.”

“How did you get in here?” Mike asked with a frown, wondering how in the world the girl had managed to make it all the way up to his bedroom on the second floor without anyone else waking up or noticing her presence. “Did you use your powers?”

Eleven shook her head. “Front door. Not rude.”

“But...my dad’s sleeping in the living room.”

“Yes,” Eleven said simply, as though stating a fact.

Damn, thought Mike, we really need to work on our home security.

He was brought back out of his thoughts almost immediately when he heard Eleven sniff and saw a fresh tear run down her reddening

cheek.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Mike said quickly, his mouth running a mile a minute as he turned to her and finally began to get out of bed. "No more questions. I'm here for you."

"Safe?" Eleven inquired, still reverting to one-word responses, as she often did when she was upset or angry.

"Yeah, safe, of course," Mike reassured her. "Safe with me."

"Promise?"

Mike smiled. "Promise."

Eleven finally smiled shyly, still sniffing and with tears gleaming in her eyes. "Fort?"

Mike didn't take the time to verbally respond, merely nodding and taking Eleven's hand in his. Even after all these weeks, all these months, something as simple as holding her hand still felt exciting to Mike, still caused the butterflies in his stomach to flutter about wildly.

Slowly, carefully, Mike led Eleven out of his room and down the hallway to the stairs. Once on the first floor, they quickly rounded the corner of the hall and beelined it straight for the basement, stopping only so Mike could witness his father snoring in the living room La-Z-Boy, evidently just as oblivious to what was going on around him as he was when he was awake.

Within moments, the two were in the basement, their destination in sight: the blanket fort. It was a familiar sight for the two of them, Mike having reconstructed it almost immediately following Eleven's disappearance in 1983, his last remaining link to the girl who changed his life.

For Mike, the fort represented a years' worth of waiting and longing, calling out into the void and hoping Eleven would hear his voice, wherever she was. For Eleven, however, the fort represented the first true home she ever had, the first place she ever slept where she felt truly and absolutely safe.

Mike pulled aside the single blanket hanging over the front of the fort, watching with a small and affectionate smile as Eleven easily dropped down onto all fours and crawled into the fort as though formally invited. Not that she needed an invitation; Eleven was always welcome in the Wheeler residence, at least as far as Mike was concerned, and the blanket fort was as much hers as it was his.

Without missing a beat, Eleven curled up in the middle of the fort, using the surrounding sheets and blankets as an improvised bed, and pulled the largest of these over herself for warmth. Seeing she was having some difficulty covering herself with the blanket, Mike reached into the fort and removed the corner of it from where it was caught on a wayward chair leg. Eleven smiled softly in thanks, pulling the blanket up to her chin and burying herself within its folds.

“Comfy?” Mike asked as Eleven lay curled beneath the blanket, only her head poking out. Eleven nodded in confirmation, revealing the last of her tears had dried and faded away.

“You, um...you need any more blankets or anything?” Mike continued, his throat suddenly too dry for him to speak properly.

She shook her head.

“Want some water?”

Another shake.

“Oh, okay, then,” Mike said at last, his cheeks turning red as he struggled to figure out anything to say, afraid he was going to embarrass himself in front of her again. He coughed slightly, as though trying to clear his throat. “Well, um...goodnight, El.”

With that, Mike stood up and went to leave...only to find he couldn't as something suddenly grabbed hold of the bottom of his pajama pants. Mike frowned as he looked down to find Eleven reaching out from within the blanket fort, her fingers tightening around the hem of his pants.

“Stay,” she said simply, looking up at him with those big, brown eyes

of hers that he could never deny anything to.

Mike swallowed hard. "You...you want me to sleep down here? With you?"

"Not safe," Eleven said.

"But...you're in the fort. It's safe in the fort."

"Safe with Mike," Eleven reminded him, staring at him pointedly as though he was a child failing to grasp the most basic of concepts. "I don't want the fort. I want Mike."

To say Mike's heart skipped a beat would be an understatement; he was at least ninety percent sure his heart stopped completely for at least a few seconds upon hearing those words. His sweat glands felt like they had suddenly kicked into overdrive and he felt his cheeks grow red and hot, so hot he felt like he was going to overheat.

"Are you...are you sure?" Mike asked, stumbling over his words once again. "I mean...do you think it's alright? Is it, like, appropriate, or...?"

Eleven surprised him by rolling her eyes impatiently. "Just sleep. No funny business."

"No funny business?"

Eleven smiled softly as her face turned a deep red. "Maybe a little funny business. Just a little."

No longer trusting himself to say much of anything at all, Mike simply smiled back at Eleven and nodded gently before dropping to his hands and knees and crawling into the fort to join her. Eleven scooted closer to the interior of the fort to make room for him, pulling back her large blanket so they could share it together.

Mike took his place on the bed of sheets and pillows, carefully pulling the blanket back up so it covered both Eleven and himself. Still smiling softly, Mike's very proximity evidently being enough to cheer her up, Eleven wriggled closer so she could lay her head upon Mike's chest, the better to hear the rhythmic, soothing beat of his heart.

Instinctively, without so much as thinking about it, Mike snaked his arm around Eleven's waist, as though holding her to him, and his breath momentarily caught in his throat as he felt her practically melt into his embrace.

It was odd, Mike realized, how comfortable he felt when he was with Eleven. Prior to meeting her, Mike could count on one hand the number of girls he had mustered up the courage to speak to, and he didn't even need a hand to count the number of times that had been a successful undertaking for him. But with Eleven, it was different. He felt he could talk to her about anything, could rely on her, could take her hand or hold her close without it feeling weird or awkward or strained. She wasn't just another girl to him.

She was his El.

"Better?" Mike asked, looking down at the curly-haired girl resting her head on his chest.

"Better," Eleven responded softly, her voice little more than a whisper.

"Safe?"

"Yes. Safe with you," Eleven confirmed, looking up at him one last time, her big brown eyes boring into his own and the smallest of smiles on her face. "Promise you'll be here when I wake up?"

"Promise," Mike answered, confident for once in what he was saying. "I'll never leave you, El. I never gave up on you and I never will. Ever."

Eleven had already smiled several times already that night, but none of them compared to the smile that broke out across her face when Mike told her that. Tears glimmered at the edges of her eyes for the second time that night, but these were no longer tears of fear or panic, but of joy, an emotion still new to Eleven, but one she knew she would be experiencing more and more frequently now that she had her Mike.

Not once breaking their gaze from the other, Mike and Eleven moved

in as though synchronized and closed their eyes as their lips finally met for the first time that night. Mike felt his grip on Eleven's waist tighten as he inadvertently pulled her closer to him, and her own hand resting on his chest clutched his cotton shirt as though for dear life.

Time seemed to stand still, as it always did when Mike and Eleven kissed, and transformed what was, in reality, a chaste, two-second kiss into something far more passionate. Young they may have been, inexperienced they most certainly were, but there was no denying the strength of their bond or the depth of their feelings for one another.

It used to be that Mike and Eleven always kissed as though they hadn't seen each other in months, or were never planning on seeing each other ever again, and that desperation had only further fed their longing for one another. But now that weeks and months had gone by, and life in Hawkins was beginning to return to some vague notion of normalcy, and the two knew they would never again be separated from one another, that desperation had finally given away to something purer and even more beautiful: a love fueled not by fear or panic or adversity, but by their own genuine feelings for one another.

Mike and Eleven both found themselves slightly out of breath when they finally pulled back, shyly opening their eyes and then immediately averting their gaze, embarrassed like the thirteen-year-olds they were.

"Just a little funny business," Eleven reminded Mike as she buried her fiery red face back into his chest, smiling shyly all the while.

"Just a little," Mike promised with a goofy smile of his own, his senses still clearly overwhelmed by the euphoria he experienced every time he kissed Eleven, no matter for how long.

"Goodnight, Mike," Eleven whispered into his chest as she closed her eyes, allowing his steadying heartbeat to lull her back into a peaceful slumber. "Thank you. For making me safe."

Mike smiled as he too closed his eyes for the last time that evening, the arm wrapped around Eleven's waist pulling her closer still, refusing to ever again let go of her.

“Always, El. Always.”

“Nancy, can you please wake up your brother?” Karen Wheeler asked from her position in front of the kitchen stove, busily trying to hold Holly and make scrambled eggs and bacon at the same time. Sitting by the dining room table, Nancy nodded and left without a word.

It was just after eight in the morning and Karen was hard at work making breakfast for her family, just as she did every Sunday morning, ever the dutiful (albeit thankless) mother. The sun was up and the birds were chirping, but none of the men of the house seemed to be. Ted continued to snore away in his La-Z-Boy, and Karen hadn’t seen yet seen Mike.

“He’s not in his room,” Nancy said pointedly as she returned to the kitchen. “Want me to check the basement?”

“Please,” Karen begged as she lifted Holly back up with one arm while using the other to balance a fresh pile of scrambled eggs.

Nancy almost made it to the bottom of the basement stairs before she found her younger brother, and when she did, she found herself coming to an abrupt stop. A smile crossed her face as she viewed the scene before her. Mike had indeed spent the night in the basement, it would seem, but he had not done so alone.

Eleven (Jane Hopper as she was ‘officially’ known to the members of the Wheeler family who weren’t in on the girl’s true origins) lay cuddled next to Mike, her head and most of her left arm resting comfortably on his chest, rising and falling gently with each breath he took. Mike’s head rested atop Eleven’s, cushioned by her curly hair, and his right arm remained wrapped around her waist, almost protectively so.

Yet, of all the juicy little details Nancy took in, many of which she planned on using as ammunition the next time Mike sneaked into her room or acted like a brat, the one that most stuck with Nancy was just how peaceful Mike and Eleven looked together. It felt like it had been months or years since Nancy last saw her brother sleep in such a

calm and restful state, and she knew Eleven's sleeping patterns could not have been much better, considering all the horrible things the poor girl had been forced to deal with in her short thirteen years of life.

As they lay there together, breathing softly and resting peacefully, Mike and Eleven looked almost serene in their bliss. They seemed safe, protected, loved in one another's arms. More than anything, they seemed right.

Nancy shook her head as she turned away from the two and began heading back up the basement stairs to the kitchen above. She knew this would only end in trouble, whether their mother or Chief Hopper be the first to find them like this, and she wholly planned on teasing Mike endlessly regardless of the result. But for now, at least, the two could continue to sleep, blissfully unaware of the chaos that was sure to ensue once they woke. For now, they could rest.

For now, they were safe.

Author's Note:

And there we go. Hope it wasn't too wordy, and thanks for reading! Feel free to leave a kudos or review below!